



42nd Infantry Division - Operation Iraqi Freedom 3 News

DISPATCH

Volume 34

October 16, 2005

Task Force Liberty witnesses large voter turnout in North Central Iraq



A voter submits her ballot at a polling center in Kirkuk. The Salah Ad Din Provincial Joint Coordination Center estimates nearly 40,000 voters turned out in the Tikrit area. (Photo courtesy of the Salah Ad Din Provincial Joint Coordination Center)

Story by Maj. Richard Goldenberg
42nd Infantry Division Public Affairs

TIKRIT, Iraq -- Iraqi police and army forces, with the support of Task Force Liberty Soldiers across the four provinces of North Central Iraq, sustained their successful efforts throughout the day and established an unprecedented voter turnout at the polling centers.

Events at polling centers and the day's voter turnout overwhelmed any terrorist attempts to dissuade voters. By day's end, there were

36 attacks in North Central Iraq. This is less than one third the level of terrorist activity when compared with the previous voting period on Jan. 30.

Task Force Liberty Soldiers and their Iraqi Security Forces partners discovered 12 IEDs and one mine prior to detonation during the course of their security operations as part of the completion of Operation Saratoga. Iraqi police, soldiers and Task Force Liberty elements detained nearly 70 suspected insurgents throughout the day.

The initial summary of events validates the confident estimates of Task Force Liberty Soldiers who appraised the preparations across North Central Iraq to President George W. Bush on Thursday.

"We're really happy to see, during the preparation for this one, sir, they're doing everything. They're making the plans, they're calling each other, they've got it laid out," summarized 1st Lt. Gregg A. Murphy during the teleconference with the White House.

Continued Page 2

Voter Turnout continued

"So on Saturday, we're going to be beside them, we're going to be there to support them through anything. But we can't wait to share in their success with them on Sunday," Murphy had told the President on Thursday.

Today's actions by the Iraqi police and army forces across North Central Iraq required no combat or logistics mission response from Task Force Liberty forces. The security operations of Iraqi police and army elements set the conditions for a voter turnout above Iraqi Election Committee (IECI) expectations.

The Salah Ad Din Provincial Joint Coordination Center, along with the provincial IECI representative, estimate nearly 450,000 voters throughout the province at about 5 p.m. with some of the provincial polling centers yet to return their information. This represents an estimated 74% turnout for registered voters in the province and more than a three-fold increase in voter participation.

In Diyala Province, IECI officials report an estimated voter turnout of 340,000 citizens, an increase of 150% from the previous voting on Jan. 30. Estimates for both Kirkuk and As Sulayminayah Province are expected to meet or exceed previous voter turnout.



An Iraqi citizen in Tikrit proudly displays his evidence of voting on Oct. 15. (Photo by Sgt. Jennifer Eidson, 22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

"It has been an historic and great day in the history of Iraq," said Ahmed M. Salih, the Salah Ad Din Provincial spokesman during an evening press conference from Tikrit.



Iraqi police conduct an inner cordon security search of voters in Samarra. (Photo courtesy of the Salah Ad Din Provincial Joint Coordination Center)

Task Force Liberty Soldiers give security assessment to President



Soldiers from the 42nd Infantry Division and Task Force Liberty prepare for their teleconference with President George W. Bush in Tikrit, Iraq on Oct. 14 to provide their personal security assessment in advance of the referendum vote this weekend. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Matthew Acosta, 22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

Story by Maj. Richard Goldenberg,
42nd Infantry Division Public Affairs

TIKRIT, Iraq -- Soldiers from Task Force Liberty spoke with President George W. Bush Oct. 13 to express their confidence in the preparations for the referendum vote in North Central Iraq.

The Soldiers, from across all the division's headquarters and brigade combat teams, provided the President with their perspectives on the progress of Iraqi Security Forces and security efforts to safeguard the referendum vote on October 15th.

"I want to thank the members of the 42nd Infantry Division and Task Force Liberty for serving our country with such distinction and honor," the President told the Soldiers in Tikrit. "I want you to know that the mission you are on is vital to achieving peace and to protecting America."

All but two Soldiers represented members of Task Force Liberty's Military Transition Teams, those forward elements of the division partnered with Iraqi army battalions and brigades in North Central Iraq.

Representing the 42nd Infantry Division was Capt. Brent Kennedy, the moderator for the teleconference based on his experience as an operations officer for the division staff, and Master Sgt. Corine Lombardo, the division public affairs operations chief.

Capt. David Williams and Sgt. David Smith-Barry represented the Soldiers of the 1st Brigade Combat Team. Joining them in a partnership with the Iraqi army's 4th Division were Capt. Stephen Pratt and Sgt. Dustin Giesbrecht of the 116th Brigade Combat Team.

Capt. David Smith and Sgt. 1st Class Jerry Munoz from the 3rd Brigade Combat Team and 1st Lt. Gregg Murphy and Sgt. Ronald Long of the 278th Regimental Combat Team represented the partners of the Iraqi army's 5th Division.

In addition, Sgt. Maj. Akheel Shaker Nassir, an operations senior trainer from the 5th Iraqi Division joined the group to speak with the President.

The Soldiers gathered one day prior from across Diyala, Salah Ad Din and Kirkuk Provinces to setup a video teleconference from the division main command post on Forward Operating Base Danger in Tikrit.

"I would have packed better," said Sgt. 1st Class Jerry Munoz of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team. "I had something like ten minutes to pack a combat pack and jump on a helo."

The Soldiers knew the topic of referendum preparations and Iraqi army progress would be foremost on the President's agenda and each was asked to provide their own personal assessment based on their own experiences over some 10-11 months of service in North Central Iraq.

"This was such a great opportunity," said 1st Lt. Gregg Murphy from the 278th Regimental Combat Team following the President's remarks. "I didn't know the full reason for coming together until I arrived in Tikrit. But when I found out we'd be speaking to the President, I wanted to be sure he heard a real assessment from what I've seen firsthand."

The Soldiers returned to their units on Oct. 14, in time to rejoin their units and support the referendum vote on Saturday alongside their Iraqi army partners.